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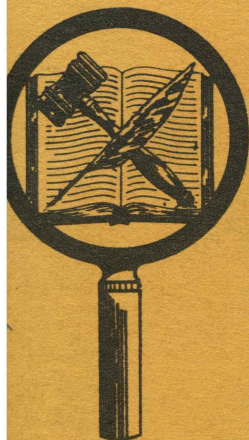
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Ombudsman Report

Lieutenant Governor
WILLIAM C. PHELPS
Ombudsman

COVER STORY

The magnifying glass is the tool of an examiner, one who wishes to know truth's smallest details. Here it implies that the ombudsman professes that same diligence and keen interest in the facts.

The tome depicted conceals two legends — one on either side of the central dividing line as to keep proper balance. The legend on the left says "The voice of the people, I will defend." That on the right says "Justice for all."

The plume denotes the constitutional charter. The gavel indicates the law to enforce the charter and the harmonious counterpoise between government and the governed.



OFFICE OF
THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI
65101

WILLIAM C. PHELPS
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

(314) 751-2421

Open Letter to the Citizens of Missouri
and the General Assembly

Since taking office in January 1973, it has been my goal to make the office of the Lieutenant Governor a full-time office geared to serve the needs of Missouri citizens.

The ombudsman program in its six years of operation has served over 8,000 citizens having complaints or inquiries about state government. In fiscal year 1978-79, 2,021 requests were received.

The ombudsman program seeks to assist citizens having problems with state government while using those complaints to identify areas of the system which could be improved. When citizens do not have a place to have their questions answered promptly, or they do not know where to turn in a myriad of departments, divisions, agencies, and bureaus, they can easily become frustrated, angry or apathetic towards government and the political process.

The ombudsman attempts to provide relief to those citizens by taking the time to answer their questions, double-checking information, and cutting through the "red tape" of bureaucracy.

The resolution of citizen's requests are possible only through the cooperation of state agency personnel, the legislature and other elected officials. I wish to express my gratitude to all those who have assisted in answering citizens' inquiries.

Personally, it has been a satisfying experience to have helped citizens in a continuing effort to make state government more responsive to Missourians.

William C. Phelps
Ombudsman

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The Ombudsman Concept

What is an Ombudsman?

Definition — An ombudsman is a high-level independent public official, or an office established by law to receive complaints from aggrieved citizens involving government agencies and employees. An ombudsman investigates, recommends corrective action, and issues reports.

History — The ombudsman concept dates back to 1809 when the Swedes established a "Parliament's Agent of Justice" as a counterweight in the balance of power with the King. It was not until 1919 that another country, Finland, followed Sweden's lead and established an office of the ombudsman. In 1969, Hawaii became the first state to have an ombudsman. Since then, the ombudsman concept has spread throughout the United States with federal, state, and local ombudsman offices.

Why an Ombudsman?

The purpose of an ombudsman is to improve the quality of service the public receives from government, in an effort to improve the public's attitude toward government. To accomplish this purpose, an ombudsman assumes two roles, one of giving immediate response to a complaint, and the other of analyzing a complaint to find flaws or breakdowns in the system.

As American government on every level increases in scope and complexity, the need for assistance to individual citizens to help alleviate the frustration of bureaucracy also increases. The modern state has, to its credit, assumed a multitude of functions affecting the lives and property of its citizens. However, citizens are far removed from bureaucratic decision-making, and its accompanying jargon. The power of the bureaucracy has become so great that the status of the individual need additional protection.

If bureaucrats become overzealous to written rules, the consequences can be detrimental to the people and contrary to the goals of public policy. A small error can adversely affect the lives of many people.

The ombudsman seeks to assist the individual who may not know where to turn, what a decision may mean, or feels lost in a myriad of bureaucrats, regulations, policies and procedures.



The Ombudsman in Missouri

Who is the Ombudsman?

On July 11, 1973, Lieutenant Governor William C. Phelps voluntarily assumed the role of Missouri's Ombudsman.

During his 12 years of service as a member of the Missouri House of Representatives, Phelps realized that many citizens were not familiar with the administrative structure and procedures of state government. As a legislator he had co-sponsored bills which would have created an ombudsman for the state, but they failed to receive sufficient support for passage.

Upon his election as Lieutenant Governor in 1972, the ombudsman concept became part of Phelps' plan to expand the operation of the office to a full-time basis. Since the duties of the Lieutenant Governor did not require full-time service, the office could effectively expand to handle citizen complaints.

Phelps formally announced his intention to serve as Ombudsman in 1973 stating "there is a need for a visible ombudsman for citizens who request help — one that responds to needs, not pressure."

After examining other programs, it was concluded that enforcement or subpoena powers which were embodied in various legislative proposals were not essential to a successful ombudsman program. The program has sufficient access to records from the open records law and the necessary cooperation from agency directors. The Ombudsman acts as a citizen's aide, not a prosecutor, using the power of persuasion.

What are the Powers and Limitations of the Ombudsman?

The areas within the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman are:

1. Investigate a complaint concerning inaction or improper action of an administrative agency or employees of state government.

2. Enlist the cooperation of an agency if an investigation shows that a mistaken, unfair, or arbitrary action has occurred or there has been no action when action was justified.
3. Request timely response to the complaints.
4. Provide confidential treatment of cases and complaints upon request.
5. Answer questions relating to government at any level for persons who do not know where or to whom the questions should be directed.

Through this service, the individual citizen can be benefited and hopefully, the citizen's faith in government restored.

Areas outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman are:

1. Actions of local government such as cities and counties, and the federal government.
2. Acts of the legislature and the Governor.
3. Courts and adversary proceedings in quasi-judicial agencies in which parties should be represented by attorneys.
4. Disputes between private parties, which do not involve agencies of state government.
5. Personnel decisions regarding the hiring and firing of state employees.
6. Money, favors, gifts, or any other form of payment for services rendered in connection with Ombudsman responsibilities cannot be accepted.

Although he has no jurisdiction over local and federal matters, the Ombudsman attempts to inform the appropriate official of any complaint related to their unit of government so that consideration of the problem can be given by the appropriate officials.

The Ombudsman also becomes an advocate for change or repeal of a rule or regulation of an agency which, as a result of his investigation, is discovered to be unreasonable, arbitrary, or oppressive.

Why the Lieutenant Governor as Ombudsman?

The ombudsman trend is growing in the United States. Approximately 20 state governments have adopted some form of ombudsman service. Other Lieutenant Governors have established or are considering the program for their states. The concept of an elected state official serving as ombudsman is logical since an appointed system renders that person responsible to the appointing authority and not to the citizenry.

The Lieutenant Governor of Missouri is ideally suited to serve as Ombudsman because he:

1. Is independently elected by other voters of the state and thus is responsible only to the public at large rather than an appointing authority.
2. Is not limited to specific duties nor part of a state department and therefore has flexibility in the operations of the office and an overview of the entire executive branch.
3. Has the prestige as the second highest elected official in the state through which the respect and cooperation of an agency is enlisted.

4. Can function as Ombudsman at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayer because the existing office and staff is utilized together with student interns.

The unique differential in the Missouri ombudsman program is its emphasis on youth. The Lieutenant Governor enlists highly qualified students who show a genuine interest in political science, public administration, or consumer affairs to serve as aides in the program.

The ombudsman aides receive college credit and obtain a keen perspective of state government not found in any classroom. With supervision by Phelps and his staff, the aides work directly on real problems of state government. Their valuable assistance enables the Ombudsman to give personal attention to each citizen request.



The Ombudsman in Action

Number of Cases

Since its inception in 1973, the Ombudsman Program has helped over 8,000 citizens having complaints and inquiries.

In fiscal year 1978-79, more people contacted the office of citizen complaints than in any previous year — 2,021. This represents an increase of 161% over the first year's total of 773 contacts. The growth of the program was due to an increase in publicity and staff. Since the ombudsman staff consists chiefly of college interns who receive college credits instead of pay, these citizens could be served at minimal cost.

Yearly Caseload

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1973-74	773
1974-75	1,400
1975-76	1,273
1976-77	1,562
1977-78	1,394
1978-79	2,021
TOTAL	8,423

In past years, the bulk of the cases are received in the summer months due, in large part, to an experienced staff since most of the interns are hired during the summer after a semester's experience. Consequently, the number of cases increase during mid-semester after the orientation and training takes place and the interns are more accustomed to handling cases. The volume can be influenced to a degree by the number of press releases and radio public service announcements (see appendix) sent to the media.

After January 1979, there was a general increase in cases by an average of 55 cases per month. This increase was due to

changing the frequency of "Ombudsman Action" (see appendix), a question and answer news column sent to newspapers around the state.

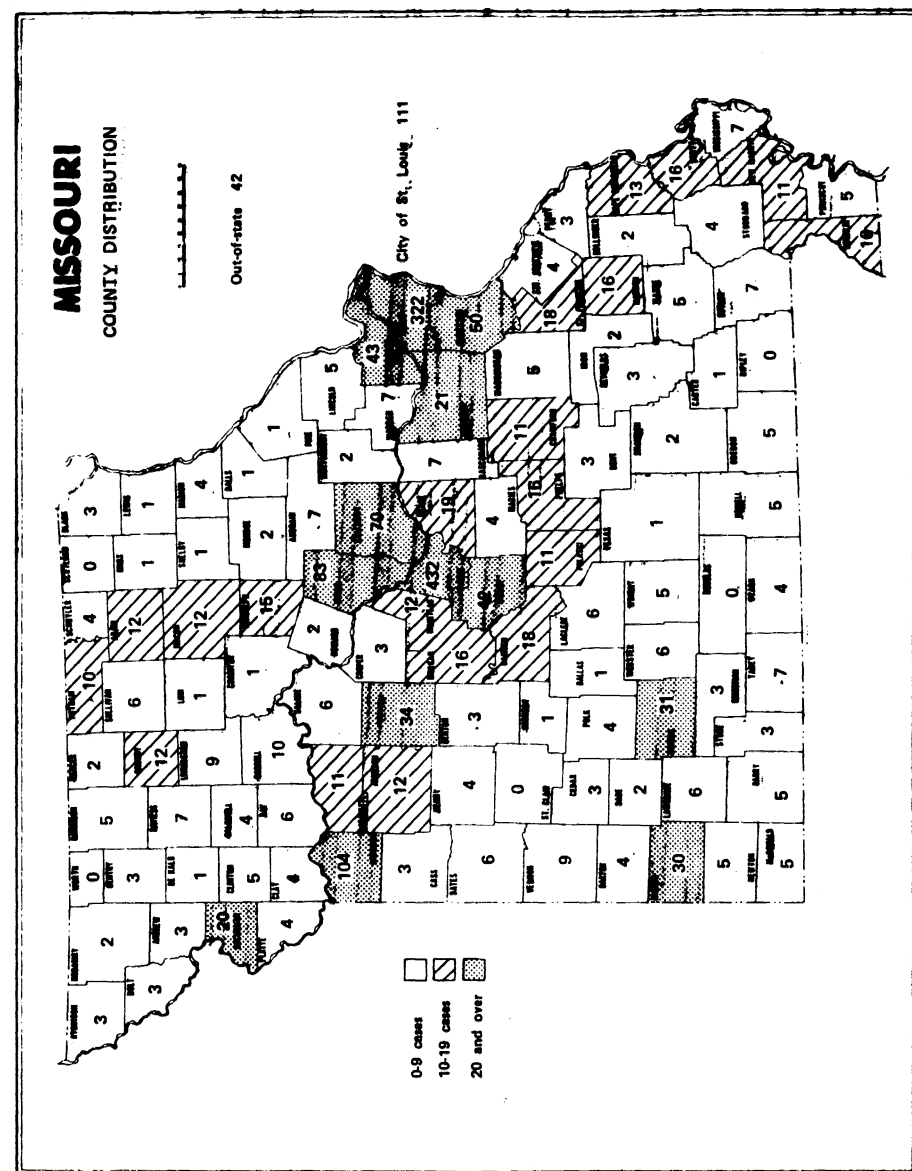
Monthly Caseload

<u>Month</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
July	158	7.82
August	152	7.52
September	139	6.89
October	134	6.63
November	141	6.98
December	124	6.13
January	194	9.60
February	159	7.87
March	209	10.34
April	182	9.0
May	198	9.80
June	231	11.43
TOTAL	2,021	100.00

Case Distribution by County

During the six years the program has been in operation, cases have been received from all of Missouri's 114 counties and the City of St. Louis. In 1978-79, all but 4 counties were represented.

The county from which the citizens contacted the ombudsman the most was Cole County. This large number, 432, is due to the greater accessibility of the program to Cole County residents than any other area of the state because the individual



can call free of charge. It is hoped that eventually the need for an incoming toll-free number making the program equally accessible to all Missourians will be recognized by the Legislature. The request for funds was rejected three years ago.

The metropolitan areas of St. Louis and Kansas City were responsible for 537 or 27 percent of the total cases received. In the first year of the program, 1 in 8 cases came from these areas, 1 in 3 in the second year, 1 in 4 in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth years of operation.

The remaining 52 percent of the cases were received from areas outside the two metropolitan areas and Cole County.

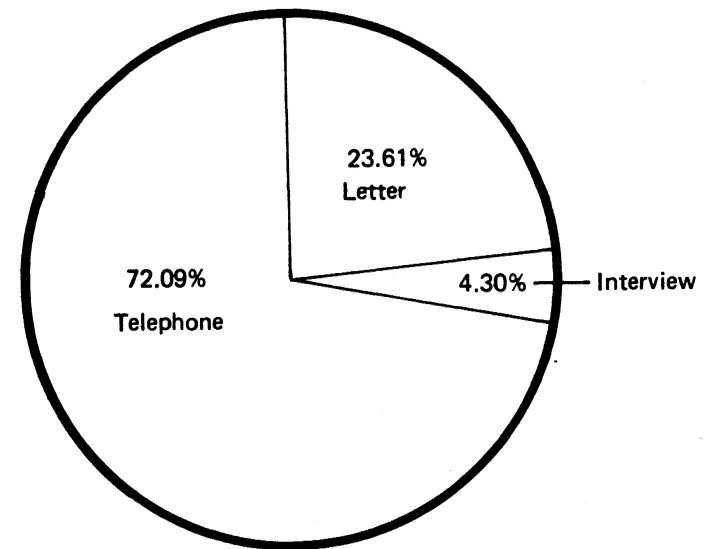
In 14 counties and the City of St. Louis, over 20 citizens from each county contacted the ombudsman requesting assistance. In 21 counties, citizens contacted the ombudsman 10-19 times from each county.

How the Ombudsman is Contacted

The ombudsman receives complaints and inquiries from citizens from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Fridays. Citizens may write, telephone, or contact the ombudsman in person.

In six years of operation, the number of letters has diminished while the number of persons contacting the ombudsman by phone has increased. In the first year of operation, 58 percent of the people wrote to the ombudsman. In 1978-79, only 23.6 percent wrote, while 72 percent phoned.

How the Ombudsman is Contacted



Why the Ombudsman is Contacted

Each of the 2,021 cases received were considered either complaints or inquiries. In 1978-79, seventy-five percent of the cases received were considered complaints while twenty-five percent were considered inquiries. In situations where the caller has both a complaint and an inquiry, the case will be designated as a complaint.

Why the Ombudsman is Contacted

	<u>Complaint</u>	<u>Inquiry</u>
July	115	43
August	123	29
September	116	23

October	102	32
November	111	30
December	100	24
January	131	63
February	116	43
March	150	59
April	123	59
May	163	35
June	175	56
TOTAL	1,525	496
PERCENT	75.46	24.54

Nature of Complaint and Inquiry

Each complaint and inquiry received is classified into a category. Since cases are often complex and may involve more than one issue, each case can be assigned as many as three different "natures". Therefore, the statistical data is based upon a total of 2,531.

In 1978-79, the primary reasons for contacting the ombudsman were (1) lack of available information; (2) consumer protection complaint; (3) requests investigation, and (4) communications breakdown by an agency or an individual.

When dealing with a consumer complaint, the Ombudsman works with the agency that has regulatory authority. If none exists, the citizen is given an explanation of the programs specifically geared to working with consumer problems in both the public and private sector.

Two state agencies given authority to investigate consumer complaints were contacted: the Department of Consumer Affairs, Regulation and Licensing (C.A.R.L.), and the Consumer Protection Division in the Attorney General's Office.

If the matter was not appropriate for C.A.R.L. or the Attorney General, the Ombudsman would investigate.

The Ombudsman makes an effort not to be simply an information and referral agency, but an office that advocates citizen's justifiable requests and follows the case through to its conclusion. A citizen is never simply given an agency or a telephone number to call. The Ombudsman contacts the agency, making certain that a specific individual there can help the citizen with their particular problem after which the Ombudsman will give the information to the citizen. The Ombudsman will always make follow-up calls to the citizen to make sure all of their questions and needs were answered.

The Ombudsman does not conduct investigations into matters that are within the jurisdiction of law enforcement authorities, but can direct an individual to the appropriate law enforcement agency, court, or attorney engaged in the private practice of law.

Requests for financial assistance can come from a family who is in need of financial support or from a city or organization wanting to obtain financial help for a special project. The Ombudsman can provide information on sources of funding and procedures for making application.

Personnel decisions regarding the hiring, firing, salary increases, and promotions of state employees are not within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, unless Merit System grievance procedures or the department's own rules are not followed. Employment matters within the private sector are outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction unless discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry or handicapped is involved, or to the extent that Missouri statutes protect the citizen.

Many complaints result from a lack of communication or a lack of available information. The Ombudsman will often times act as a mediator and provide necessary information to aid citizens in their situation.

Nature of Complaint or Inquiry

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Administrative Mix-up	96	3.79
Business Interest	59	2.51
Communications Breakdown	194	8.25
Consumer Protection Complaint	371	15.78
Desires Financial Assistance	144	6.13
Desires Forms and Applications	39	1.65
Desires Increased Subsidy	18	.76
Desires Legal Assistance	75	3.19
Desires Legislative Information	47	1.99
Desires Rule or Law Change	55	2.34
Desires Scheduling Information	3	.13
Desires Statutory Information	119	5.06
Discrimination	22	.93
Election Matter	14	.59
Employment and Personnel	121	5.14
Lack of Available Information	471	20.03
Matter of Litigation	90	3.82
Natural Resource Problem	39	1.65
Personality Dispute	17	.76
Protests Agency Decision	180	7.66
Public Works Problem	106	4.50
Requests Investigation	242	10.29
Resource Shortages	7	.29
Irrational Complaint	36	1.53
Unclassified Complaint	44	1.87
TOTAL	2,531	

Frequency of Agency Contact

After a citizen contacts the Office of Citizen Complaints, it is often necessary for the Ombudsman to contact the appropriate parties in order to arrive at a resolution.

In 1978-79, 45% of the cases involved at least one of the 15 state departments. The three most frequently contacted were the Department of Social Services, the Department of Consumer Affairs, Regulation and Licensing (C.A.R.L.), and the Department of Revenue. These departments generally have more direct contact with the general public than other departments. The Ombudsman enjoys a good working relationship with the state agencies in a common effort to aid Missouri citizens.

Much resource material has been obtained and filed in the office, so that 459 or more than 22% of the cases could be resolved without agency contact.

Although the Ombudsman is designed to investigate and reply to inquiries about state government, 160 cases involved federal and local government. Although these agencies are beyond the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, an effort was made to put the citizen in contact with the appropriate person.

Although the number of contacts with the Missouri Small Claims Court only registers 3, this may be misleading as the Ombudsman actually suggests the Small Claims Court to the citizen as a method to redress their grievance many more times than 3. The number 3 refers to the number of times the ombudsman staff contacted a Small Claims Court to seek specific information.

Frequency of Agency Contact

State Executive Departments

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Office of Administration	33	1.583
Department of Agriculture	17	.742
Department of Conservation	6	.300
Department of Consumer Affairs, Regulation and Licensing	246	11.925
Department of Elementary Education	27	.989
Department of High Education	36	1.632
Department of Highways	35	1.632
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations	61	2.671
Department of Mental Health	23	1.138
Department of Natural Resources	34	2.127
Department of Public Safety	29	1.237
Department of Revenue	171	7.620
Department of Social Services	247	11.034
Department of Transportation	6	.002
TOTAL	971	44.632

<u>Department or Agency</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Federal	26
Agriculture, U.S. Department of	13
U.S. Army	7
Environmental Protection Agency	2
Federal Trade Commission	2
Health, Education and Welfare, Department of	3
Social Security Administration	20

Housing and Urban Development, Department of	15
Labor, Department of	16
National Park Service	2
Federal Energy Office	3
Total Federal	96
Local	64
Total Local	64
State	
Elected Officials	134
Total Elected Officials	134
Executive Agencies	
Office of Administration	13
Personnel, Division of	12
Purchasing	7
Agriculture, Department of	15
Conservation, Department of	6
Consumer Affairs, Regulation and Licensing, Department of	58
Arts, Council of the	8
Commerce and Industrial Development, Division of	6
Finance, Division of	13
Human Rights Commission	4
Insurance, Division of	71
Professional Registration, Division of	14
Public Service Commission	60
Public Counsel, Office of	0
Savings and Loan, Division of	3

Tourism Commission	4
Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of	13
Special Education, Division of	6
Vocational Rehabilitation, Division of	8
Higher Education, Department of	5
Colleges and Universities	24
State Library	4
State Highway Department	33
Labor and Industrial Relations, Department of	4
Employment Security, Division of	35
Labor and Industrial Relations Commissions	8
Workmen's Compensation	7
Mental Health, Department of	12
State Hospitals and Schools	11
Natural Resources, Department of	18
Air Conservation Commission	1
Clean Water Commission	15
Soil and Water Districts Commissioner	1
Solid Waste Management	5
Parks and Recreation, Division of	3
Public Safety, Department of	7
Safety Fire Marshal	1
Highway Patrol	14
Liquor Control	3
Missouri Law Enforcement Assistance Council	0
Adjutant General	0
National Guard	0
Revenue, Department of	48

State Tax Commission	23
Transportation-Registration, Licensing, Safety Responsibility	83
Social Services, Department of	14
Office of Aging	10
Corrections, Division of	19
Family Services, Division of (Welfare)	128
Health, Division of	35
Nursing Home Administrators, Board of	5
Probation and Parole, Board of	5
Veterans' Affairs, Division of	2
Youth Services, Division of	5
Transportation, Department of	<u>6</u>
Total Executive Agencies	865
Legislative	33
Supreme Court	8
Missouri Bar	11
No Jurisdiction	80
Omnibus	114
Resolved Without Agency Contact	459
Small Claims Court	3

Time Required for Completion

The average length of time required to complete a case is 13 days. Fifty-one percent of the cases received were completed in less than 5 days. The Ombudsman does not require complaints to be in writing and tries to make as many contacts by telephone as possible, because this is quicker and less

bureaucratic. It also avoids creation of a small bureaucracy to cut through the red tape of the larger bureaucracy.

Cases requiring more than 30 days to complete amounted to 260 or 13 percent of the total caseload. Many of these cases were dependent upon decisions by other authorities.

Time Required for Completion

	<u>0-5</u>	<u>6-15</u>	<u>16-30</u>	<u>Over 30</u>
July	90	31	21	16
August	86	33	17	16
September	57	44	19	20
October	78	25	19	12
November	73	32	22	14
December	66	32	13	13
January	105	36	28	25
February	69	39	28	23
March	93	55	29	32
April	100	39	17	26
May	102	32	32	32
June	<u>120</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>31</u>
TOTAL	1,039	445	278	260
Percentage	51%	22%	14%	13%

Total Number of Cases: 2021

Average: 13.099 (13 days)

26,474 total day

2,021 cases

13.09 days

Citizen Satisfaction

In an effort to obtain a general idea of how well the citizen is satisfied with the efforts of the Ombudsman, each case is given a code identifying the general satisfaction of the office and the resolution. After a resolution has been reached, the aide handling the particular case assigns one of the five criteria. In order to check the accuracy of this system, a random survey is now under way to double-check the satisfaction level.

In 1978-79, 65% of the citizens who contacted the Ombudsman were satisfied with the office and satisfied with the resolution. Fourteen percent were dissatisfied with the resolution offered, but satisfied with the efforts of the office. In 19% of the cases, the response was unknown. This could be due to a variety of reasons: the citizen did not have a telephone, all correspondence was completed by mail, or the aide assigning the code was unable to determine the level of satisfaction.

This measurement was just begun at the end of the first quarter, which is why the total is only 1335.

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Satisfied with resolution, satisfied with office	862	64.57
Satisfied with resolution, dissatisfied with office	3	.22
Dissatisfied with resolution, satisfied with office	188	14.08
Dissatisfied with resolution, dissatisfied with office	27	2.02
No indication or unknown	<u>255</u>	19.10
	1,335	



The Office of the Ombudsman

The Staff

The Lieutenant Governor employs two full-time staff members to supervise the ombudsman program and utilizes student interns from Missouri colleges and universities to act as ombudsman aides, usually 8-12 student interns each semester. Each student works a minimum of 12 hours a week in the Capitol office.

The use of student interns provides a dual benefit — for the student and for Missouri citizens. The internship experience affords the student a broad overview of state government in a work atmosphere, as they answer citizen complaints and inquiries, complete preliminary research, and contact appropriate parties in order to arrive at a satisfactory resolution. Since the interns receive college credit, they are not paid. Therefore, the program can be operated at the lowest possible cost to Missouri citizens.

More than 90 students have participated in the program since 1973. The following colleges and universities have sponsored 1978-79 ombudsman aides: Westminster College, University of Missouri, Stephens College, Northeast Missouri State University, William Jewell College.

The Cost

The budget for the Office of Lieutenant Governor as appropriated by the Missouri State Legislature is not itemized by program area. In 1978-79, Lieutenant Governor William C. Phelps' total budget was \$123,581.10, which includes the Lieutenant Governor's salary of \$16,000 established by Missouri law.

The direct cost of operating the ombudsman program for 1978-79 was \$30,915.49 which included the salaries of two full-time staff persons, temporary aides, part-time secretarial, cost of computer time for analyzing data, printing, postage, and supplies.

The average cost per case of the 2,021 cases was \$15.30. A concerted effort is continually made by Lieutenant Governor Phelps to offer the best services at the least possible cost.



Appendix

Ombudsman Reports

by Lt. Governor William C. Phelps

JOB REFERRAL SERVICES

The closing of schools for the summer further complicates the employment situation. Many young people go door to door looking for a job. The job opportunities exist, but many persons do not know where to find them.

The Ombudsman occasionally receives letters from people seeking employment information. There are three government programs that help citizens locate jobs.

The agency, primarily responsible is Job Service, a part of the Missouri Division of Employment Security. It helps people find jobs that suit their qualifications through counseling, testing and referral services.

At the heart of Job Service is a computerized listing of more than 10,000 jobs in the state. The jobs are in both the public and private sector — everything from part-time baby-sitting to high-paying administrative work. The system identifies a person's skills and matches them with employer's considerations and needs.

The service, which is free, is available at the nearest Job Service office located in every county, usually in the county seat or largest city. Check your phone book for the nearest office.

The Human Development Corporation, a federal

agency, administers the Work Experience program, designed to give students and adults job experience for use in future employment. Eligibility for the program, which offers summer and after-school employment, is based on several variables, but is generally geared to low-income persons.

For more information contact the local Human Development Corporation office listed in the phone book.

The third employment program offered by a government agency is the Public Service Employment program administered by the Division of Employment Security. Under several federal grants, the agency offers temporary employment in state agencies, schools, county courts and cities, depending on how long you've been employed and your income level. This program is administered through Job Service.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman. Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Reports

by Lt. Governor William C. Phelps

NEEDY FAMILY HELPED

Amidst unfavorable publicity about welfare fraud, those who have real and legitimate needs sometimes are forgotten. Social service programs are designed to help poor persons, who for one reason or another cannot help themselves. They often cannot meet their basic needs - housing, clothing and food.

When a woman from St. Louis called the Ombudsman recently, it was clear that she needed someone to help untangle the bureaucratic tape that was preventing her from feeding her 10 children, all under the age of 18.

The Ombudsman investigation revealed that through a series of problems with the bureaucracy, she had been cut off from receiving money through Aid to Dependent Children and the Division of Family Services. She had to use her last \$16 to pay part of her phone bill. She was concerned that without a phone in her 12th floor apartment, she would be helpless in case of a break-in.

Because she could not get to the Division of Family Services office due to family responsibilities, her funds

were cut off. She had reapplied, but due to a delay caused by a computer backlog, she had not received anything. Her food stamp card was useless, if she did not have cash to make her purchase.

In addition, her case was being tossed around by Division of Family Services as if it was a ball. The man who had been assigned the case, gave it to a woman, who gave it to another man, who in turn did not want to handle it.

When the Ombudsman talked to the supervisor, Division of Family Services waved its normal procedure and let the woman have the food stamps at no cost. Without bureaucratic entanglements, she was able to feed her children.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Report

by Lt. Governor William C. Phelps

SANITATION FIRM CITED FOR POLLUTION

At the initiative of the Ombudsman, the Department of Natural Resources has issued an order for a Barton County sanitation company to clean up its landfill or face possible legal action.

Department officials, who one month before had inspected Valley Sanitation Services, Inc. landfill and found only minor problems, reinspected it July 26 at the request of the Ombudsman. As a result, the state agency directed the sanitation company to comply with state solid waste regulations by September 15 or the agency will seek a court injunction to enforce compliance.

Specifically, the department cited the sanitation company for not properly diverting surface drainage, failure to cover solid waste property, contaminating creeks with acid mine drainage, seepage of water through the landfill and failure to properly grade

and seed the land to control erosion.

This is a classic example of how the Ombudsman program serves the people of Missouri. During a visit to Lamar July 9, the situation was brought to the attention of the Ombudsman. In one month, a problem that had existed for several years was given proper attention.

For more than four years, residents living near the landfill have complained to the state about polluted water leaking into area streams, uncovered waste and several other problems.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65201 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

QUESTION: Please let us know if there is any place we can go to seek a fairer settlement for land the state needs for new Route 63. We tried and tried to get the man representing the state to check into our offer as we knew the acreage he was listing was wrong. Our only answer was they'd condemn if we didn't settle.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted a Highway Department official, who said there may have been a discrepancy. After further checking it was found that the complainants were entitled to more money and were paid an additional \$500.

QUESTION: Where can I go to get a copy of my birth certificate?

ACTION: Contact the Bureau of Vital Statistics at 314/751-4119 or write Missouri Division of Health, Vital Records, P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

COMPLAINT: We are protesting the location of a new entrance and exit road being constructed to connect on old highway with a new one. At the present connector road, the angle of the turn is 45 degrees and lies on a hill. We feel this would be dangerous, especially for

school buses in the winter. What can be done?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the chief engineer of the Highway Department about the group's complaint. An engineer was sent out to investigate the problem and as a result, the intersection was modified as much as the terrain and grade would allow.

QUESTION: If my mother indirectly pays property taxes through rent and makes less than \$5,000 a year is she entitled to receive a property tax refund? Who should I contact about this?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted an auditor at the Department of Revenue Senior Citizen's Credit Group who said if your mother is over 65 years old she would be eligible to apply for a refund, but it depends on the amount of rent she pays which determines if she receives a refund. Forms were sent to the mother.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

QUESTION: I have applied for disability compensation from the Social Security office in Kennett. Even though I received copies of documents from the Social Security office in Baltimore, Maryland, indicating my earnings, I am not being credited for 1955, 1959, 1961, 1962 and 1973.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Social Security office in Kennett. Apparently there was a clerical error. The correction has been made and you will receive full benefits.

QUESTION: I live in the city of Mindenmines in Barton County. We are trying to get a newer fire truck and a road grader for our city. Who can I contact about this?

ACTION: There are several agencies who might be able to help you. You need to contact the Missouri State Agency for Surplus in Jefferson City, the Conservation Commission office in Neosho and the Civil Defense Director of the city of Lamar or Barton County.

QUESTION: I am trying to build a solar efficient house using specifications from the Department of Natural Resources Energy Program. They suggest I buy 2-inch thick insulation, but no one I have contacted in the area or the state has it.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted several local businesses, distributors and the insulation's manufacturer,

Dow Chemical Company. No distributor or local retailer had it in stock. However, you can contact Scruggs Lumber Company in Jefferson City, whose distributor, Georgia-Pacific in St. Louis, will order it from Dow. It should take about two weeks.

QUESTION: I live on a county road which intersects Missouri Highway 10. At this intersection the condition of the county road is so rough that a person has to bring his car to a complete stop before turning onto it. Who is responsible for the repair of this road?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Missouri Highway Department, Division of Maintenance and Traffic, which investigated the problem. Because the damage existed at an intersection, there was confusion between the county and the state as to who was responsible for repair work. After contact with the Ombudsman, the Highway Department worked out a compromise settlement with the county to fix the road.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

QUESTION: I recently returned to this country and need a new driver's license. The Department of Revenue will not issue me a license until I file a Missouri Uniform Accident Report in reference to an accident I had in 1973. However, the report will take a week or more to be authorized and I need a license immediately for my job. Can you help?

ACTION: After contacting the Department of Revenue, the Ombudsman helped the citizen cut through the bureaucratic red tape. The department agreed to issue him a license knowing it could be suspended if the form was not received.

QUESTION: Recently I wrote to the Subscription Department of U.S. News and World Report magazine concerning a letter I received indicating my subscription had expired, despite the fact I paid for it through 1980. The company said I would receive the magazine shortly, but I have not. I also think my subscription should be extended for the length of the time the company failed to send me the magazine. Can you help?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the magazine, which corrected the error. The consumer is now

receiving the magazine and a credit for those months she did not receive it.

QUESTION: The county road in front of our home has not received any maintenance for two years, except for light grading. The local officials seem unwilling to do any work. Can you help?

ACTION: The Highway Department District Engineer in the area was contacted. After looking into the problem, he worked with county officials to develop a plan for maintenance of the road.

QUESTION: What can I do about improper action of personnel in the nursing home where my father lives?

ACTION: The Bureau of Nursing Homes in the Department of Health was contacted. As a result of an investigation that revealed there may have been improper action, steps have been taken to rectify the problems at the nursing home.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

COMPLAINT: I have just been denied financial assistance from the Division of Family Services (DFS) under the Aid to Dependent Children program, because our income was too high. But, we still need assistance to help pay medical costs. What can I do?

ACTION: You have three options: apply for medical assistance from DFS, apply for Supplemental Security Income at your local Social Security office, and request an appellate hearing from DFS on the ADC program.

COMPLAINT: Our township assessor is not taxing locally mined coal as personal property, thus our school district is losing valuable financial resources. What steps can be taken?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the State Tax Commission which issued an opinion saying that all coal stockpiled January 1, should be taxed as personal property by local assessors. If the assessor does not follow the commission's policy, the county board of equalization has authority to place it on the tax rolls. The board's action may be appealed to the State Tax Commission.

QUESTION: How do I receive a state identification card in place of a driver's license?

ACTION: Take your birth certificate or another legal document and \$1 to the local Department of Revenue office to apply for a card.

COMPLAINT: Because we live on a fixed income, and receive a retirement check late in the month, it is often difficult for us to pay our utility bill on time. We have an excellent payment history.

ACTION: The manager of credit services of the utility company was contacted. Because of the special circumstances surrounding payment of the bill, the manager agreed to manually check the payment each month and allow a one or two-day grace period.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

COMPLAINT: The title to my car was lost and I applied for a new one from the Department of Revenue. My application was sent in on October 30, 1978, but I keep getting a run-around. The title is needed because I've sold my car.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Department of Revenue, which reported the title had been sent. However, the citizen still had not received her title more than a week after it was sent. Upon further investigation, it was found that the department listed the car as stolen and wouldn't send the title. The Ombudsman had the department give the woman an authorized letter saying she was the titleholder and the records were corrected.

QUESTION: Can a propane gas company charge city sales tax to customers residing outside city limits?

ACTION: The city had passed a law that sales tax could be charged to gas companies inside the city. According to the law, the company must charge their rural customers, since the company is located within city limits.

QUESTION: Is any state or federal agency purchasing timberland?

ACTION: According to Ron Thoma, the land acquisition supervisor for the Department of Conservation, the state is searching for

timberland to buy. Thoma can be contacted at 314/751-4115.

COMPLAINT: My utility company just turned off my utilities for nonpayment. I'm supposed to receive Aid to Dependent Children payments, but I haven't received it yet.

ACTION: The Ombudsman verified that the citizen would receive a check, and contacted the Missouri Public Service Commission, who arranged for the person's utilities to be connected.

QUESTION: A licensed apprentice is working in my beauty shop. I didn't know until a month after I moved my shop that the apprentice has to have a new license. How can she receive credit for her work during the time her license was invalid?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Board of Cosmetology, who agreed to give the apprentice credit if the owner would swear out an affidavit saying the apprentice had worked during the time she was without a valid license.

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Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

QUESTION: In order to get insurance for my car, I need a copy of my husband's driving record. Despite my request several months ago, the Department of Revenue still hasn't sent it.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Department of Revenue, which had the wrong address for the woman's husband. The copy of his records was sent to the correct address.

QUESTION: After an accident at work, I am unable to get a job. What can I do?

ACTION: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps disabled persons gain employment and also makes disability determination for Social Security. Check the phone book for the nearest office or write: 3523

North Ten Mile Drive, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101.

QUESTION: How can I obtain high-risk insurance?

ACTION: According to the Division of Insurance, if an insurance company is unwilling to insure you, contact the Missouri Joint Underwriters Association, 1015 Locust Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63102 or call 314/421-1245.

If you have a complaint or an inquiry about state government, contact your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

For Release — February 15, 1979

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

COMPLAINT: The Division of Family Services (DFS) office in our county won't allow us to receive food stamps at our post office box. They say we need a mailbox at our home but the cost is prohibitive, since we only need food stamps for a few months. What can I do?

ACTION: The county DFS office was contacted. Under special circumstances such as yours, they will allow your food stamps to be mailed to your post office box.

COMPLAINT: I paid for a year's subscription to TV Guide magazine but only received it for five months. Can you help?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted TV Guide at 1-800-523-7933, which discovered that your subscription was given to your brother by

mistake. You will be sent a magazine subscription for a full year.

QUESTION: Who can I contact about state regulations concerning trailers and trailer courts?

ACTION: Call the Mobile Home Division of the Missouri Public Service Commission at 314/751-2557. The Commission only regulates the construction of mobile homes.

If you have a complaint or an inquiry about state government, contact your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

For Release: March 1, 1979

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

COMPLAINT: I recently received a ticket for a traffic violation and was notified by the Department of Revenue that four points were being assessed against my driving record. I think this is too much, but the Department won't verify it. How can I get some action on my complaint?

ACTION: The Department was contacted and investigated the situation at the request of the Ombudsman. An error was found and the points on the driving record were reduced. **COMPLAINT:** How can you help me with an order that I placed with Spiegel Company, but never received?

ACTION: The company was contacted and after several phone calls, the problem was corrected. The woman received a refund for her order.

COMPLAINT: Last September I applied for an antique car title from the Department of Revenue. Here it is January, and the Department acts as if they never seen my application. What can I do?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Department of Revenue, which verified that they had received the application. After further checking, it was found that a mistake on the application had caused the delay. The title was finally sent to the woman.

QUESTION: When can packaged alcohol legally be sold?

ACTION: Under Missouri law, packaged alcohol can be sold from 6:00 a.m. to 1:30 a.m., Monday through Saturday at liquor stores, most supermarkets, some drugstores and bars. On Sunday, those restaurants who have a Sunday liquor license and whose business is more than 50 percent food sales, can sell packaged alcohol from 1:00 p.m. to midnight.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

For Release: March 15, 1979

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

COMPLAINT: The Missouri Power and Light Company is about to shut off my gas and lights because of an outstanding bill. My husband just passed away. I have no income or transportation and can't find a job. What can I do?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Division of Family Services (DFS) office, who arranged to meet the woman at her home. DFS gave her some money for payment toward her bill, arranged for regular food stamp payments, and a transportation pass. The Ombudsman sent her information about Job Service, which for no fee helps Missourians find employment.

QUESTION: Are corporations required to provide financial statements for shareholders?

ACTION: According to state law, shareholders of a corporation have a right to see financial records of the company.

COMPLAINT: I have opened a small hamburger drive-in for my teenage children to operate in the summer. My son failed to pay sales tax for one quarter and now the Department of Revenue is charging me twice the amount I owe and for the months we aren't even open! Can you help?

ACTION: Although the drive-in may be seasonal and closed part of the year, you are still required to file sales tax forms. If you do not file,

the Department of Revenue will estimate the amount owed. To appeal a billing from the Department of Revenue, file an appeal with the Administrative Hearing Commission, 211 Oscar Drive, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101, within 30 days of the bill.

QUESTION: How do I get personalized license plates from the Department of Revenue?

ACTION: In order to get such a license plate, you must complete an application at any Department of Revenue office and include three choices for the six-digit plate. The cost is \$12 in addition to the normal fee for license plates.

QUESTION: Who do I contact about unemployment compensation?

ACTION: The Missouri Division of Employment Security handles claims for unemployment compensation. For more information and eligibility requirements, contact the nearest Job Service office, listed in your telephone directory, under Government-State.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

QUESTION: I know I'll never be able to file a Missouri State Income Tax Form by April 15. How can I get an extension?

ACTION: If you have a valid reason, you can file an extension by writing a letter to the Department of Revenue requesting an extension and include a copy of any letter sent to the Internal Revenue Service if you are filing for an extension with the federal government. You may also obtain and file an application for an extension at any Department of Revenue or Fee Office. There is a late filing fee and you have to pay the interest penalty. The address for an application is: Department of Revenue, Post Office Box 329, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-3055.

QUESTION: What are the eligibility requirements to receive a Missouri Senior Citizen Income Tax Credit?

ACTION: To be eligible a man or woman must be 65 years old, have a total household income of less than \$7,500, have paid property tax or rent during 1978, and have been a Missouri resident for all of 1978. You can file for the exemption on your income tax form or if you are not required to file income tax, fill out Form SC. For more information, write Senior Citizens Credit Group, Post Office Box 500, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-3505.

COMPLAINT: Because of high medical bills, I am unable to pay my gas bill. Who should I contact?

ACTION: Often, the best approach is to contact the company and try to work out a payment schedule that is satisfactory to you and the company. Many companies offer 12-month payment plans that average out high winter bills.

There are some limited federal government funds through the Emergency Energy Association Program administered by Community Action Agencies. For more information and assistance contact Missouri's Ombudsman, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

COMPLAINT: I am trying to join the Navy. When I applied, I was told that I couldn't join for medical reasons, which they refused to explain. I went to a doctor, who gave me a clean bill of health. Can you help?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Navy and asked them to re-examine the medical records of the applicant. It was discovered that the medical records had been misread. The person applied again and is now a member of the Navy.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

COMPLAINT: My 94-year-old father is in a nursing home. In addition to the money I pay for his care, he receives aid from federal, state and local governments. Because I have an illness and am retired, I can no longer pay my part of his care. Can you help?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Social Security and the Missouri Division of Family Services (DFS), who indicated they had no more aid available. Then, the local probate judge was contacted who agreed to increase the county aid immediately and re-evaluate the case when DFS aid increases in the summer.

COMPLAINT: My food stamps have been cut off because the Division of Family Services keeps adding my son's income with mine, although he can only give me about \$50 a month. Is there any way I can get them reinstated.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted DFS, which indicated there is a stipulation on how much a person must contribute to the household income to be considered a boarder. The Ombudsman encouraged the citizen to talk with DFS. When she reapplied for stamps, she was accepted as a

one-member household and also received a medicaid card.

QUESTION: Living near Whiteman Air Force Base and constantly hearing planes fly over my house, I was wondering if it would be possible to set up a program whereby the Air Force could land one of their aircraft and gave a talk about it. I know local school-children would be interested, as well as their parents.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Air Force base and arranged for a demonstration for students and parents.

QUESTION: Where can I get information about county fairs in Missouri?

ACTION: Contact the Aid to Fairs Program, State Fair, Box 111, Sedalia, Missouri 65301, 816/826-0507.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

COMPLAINT: My phone bill just came in the mail. I've been charged for a long distance phone call that I never made.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Public Service Commission, which arranged with the company to have the citizen receive a credit for the call on his next bill. The phone company investigated the complaint and substantiated the citizen's claim.

QUESTION: Last night, an insurance salesman came to my door and offered me a life insurance policy that sounded too good to be true. How can I check on the firm's credibility?

ACTION: The Division of Insurance cannot give an opinion about the credibility of an insurance company. However, it will give a person information on the number of complaints received about the company and its financial status. The Division will also discuss a policy if a citizen visits the Division's offices in Kansas City, St. Louis or Jefferson City with the policy.

COMPLAINT: I applied for a driver's license, but never received it. Now I've been told that I will have to reapply and pay an additional \$3. I think that is unreasonable.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Department of Revenue's Driver's License Bureau, which checked into the problem. The

investigation revealed a clerical error, which was corrected. She will receive the license with no charge.

COMPLAINT: Recently, I voted in a local school board election. I was surprised to discover that the election judge marked my ballot with a number and then put that same number next to my name on the list of eligible voters. Is this in accordance with election procedure?

ACTION: The Ombudsman checked the Revised Missouri State Statutes, which indicated that numbering ballots was discontinued when Missouri voters approved Constitutional Amendment No. 2 in 1976. The county prosecuting attorney should be notified about these irregularities.

QUESTION: When will the new state park, Ha Ha Tonka, near Camdenton be opened?

ACTION: According to the Department of Natural Resources, the park is scheduled to open June 10, 1979.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

For Release: May 15, 1979

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

QUESTION: How can I get my husband to pay child support, which was ordered by a court?

ACTION: The Division of Family Services (DFS) operates a Child Support Enforcement Unit designed to help divorced women receive payments from their ex-husbands that courts have awarded them. Women who currently receive Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) payments from DFS receive the service free of charge, while women who do not receive ADC payments are charged up to \$60, according to their income. Contact your local DFS office, which will arrange for the nearest Child Support Enforcement office to contact you.

QUESTION: I sent in the Senior Citizen Income Tax Credit Claim form four months ago, but haven't heard anything. Can you help?

ACTION: Normally it takes the Senior Citizen Income Tax Credit Group 16 to 20 weeks to review a claim. The Ombudsman contacted the Credit Group, which sent out the check the next day.

QUESTION: You wouldn't believe the difficulty I'm having trying to establish a credit rating to get a major credit card, despite the fact I have good credit ratings from local firms such as Stix, Baer & Fuller. I have contacted the credit bureau on several occasions about this problem and I've been told it's because of incomplete records. What can I do?

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the credit bureau which said there are two ways to help: have the companies extending you credit, write the bureau detailing your

payment history; or for a charge of \$2 per company, the credit bureau will check your credit with the company.

COMPLAINT: A year ago my 80 year old father was treated at a state hospital. After some problems with the medication, my father and I returned to the hospital to talk to the doctor. The attitude of the doctor was very rude and uncooperative. My father became so upset that it took us all day to calm him down. I think something should be done about this.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the chairman of the Department of Medicine who investigated the situation. After a discussion with the doctor in question, the man received a letter of apology from the doctor and the chairman.

QUESTION: I applied for housing from CETA but was turned down, supposedly because I am working part-time. I want to know why I was turned down.

ACTION: First CETA does not administer housing. The Ombudsman contacted the local housing authority and apparently you failed to supply them with complete information about your income. A meeting was set up between the citizen and the agency to discuss the application.

If you have a problem concerning state agencies or if you are unsure where to direct a request for information, write your Ombudsman, Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps, Box 563, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102 or call 314/751-2421.

Ombudsman Action Citizen Complaints

Lieutenant Governor Bill Phelps

QUESTION: Is there any government agency which can help me find a summer job or long-term employment?

ACTION: Job Service, a part of the Missouri Division of Employment Security, is the primary state agency providing information about employment opportunities. There are more than 10,000 jobs listed throughout the state. The service, which is free, is available at the Job Service office located in every county. Check your phone book for the nearest office.

QUESTION: I operate a beauty shop and have not received a license renewal notice from the state Board of Cosmetology. All the beauty shop operators around here are concerned because we are supposed to have new licenses by June 1.

ACTION: The Ombudsman contacted the Board of Cosmetology. Because the General Assembly is considering a measure to increase license fees, the board has not sent out renewal notices. If a beauty shop operator does not receive a renewal notice by the middle of June, she should contact the board.

QUESTION: How do I report a parent who I think is abusing his child?

ACTION: The Missouri Division of Family Services operates a toll-free hot-line 24 hours a day to report child abusers. The number is 1-800-392-3738. The division will investigate each call within 24 hours. Calls will be kept confidential.

COMPLAINT: I sent in an application for a birth certificate and \$1 and I need to get a copy of it right away for a passport. What can you do to help?

ACTION: The Ombudsman investigated the complaint. Normally it takes several weeks for a birth certificate to be mailed. However, through authorization over the phone, an employee of the person was allowed to pick up the application. The fastest way to get a copy of one's birth certificate is to personally visit a Vital Records office in Kansas City, St. Louis or Jefferson City.

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